

Food Fight

By Utah Department of Health
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Are you a victim of the diet mentality? If you've struggled with food, eating, weight and body image, you can probably count yourself in. The diet mentality means that we set ourselves up for struggles with restrictive, negative thinking that almost guarantees defeat. If we want to win the battle, we need to ditch the diet mentality and instead focus on making healthy lifestyle changes that we can embrace for good. We need to redefine the word "diet" and think of it as the food and drink that we regularly consume, not something we go on and off of every other week.

To celebrate National Nutrition month in March, take some time to focus on your diet. Choose one or two things that you would like to improve, and then make a plan and follow through with it! Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Control portions.** Use smaller bowls, plates, and utensils to eat with.
- **Choose whole foods.** Whenever possible, eat whole, fresh, and unprocessed foods. Even when you eat them in smaller amounts, you're likely to get a well-rounded group of nutrients.
- **Read labels.** When buying packaged foods, put in at least as much time into reading labels and selecting products as you do when choosing a shower gel or shampoo.
- **Eat together.** Eat meals with your family whenever possible.
- **Smaller meals more often.** Eat something every two to four hours and never let yourself "starve" from one meal to the next.
- **Scale back, don't eliminate.** Restricting your diet primes you to obsess. Instead of

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swearing off sweets, pare down your portions. Replace the foods you're limiting with naturally sweet eats such as berries, pears and other fruit to help appease your sweet tooth.

- **Take it with you.** Make healthy choices when you are on the run. Put oranges, bananas, or other fruits in your bag for quick snacks.

- **Mix it up.** Try something new with your family. Here are just a few ideas: fresh pineapple, green peppers, low-fat cheese, canned salmon, or a whole wheat pita with hummus. Vary the cereals, types of bread, and sandwich fillings you buy week to week. Add different ingredients to your typical salads. Try adding mango, Swiss chard, or tuna to your green salad.

- **Eye level.** Put rinsed and cut fruits and vegetables on a shelf in your refrigerator where you can see them.

- **Snack smarter.** If you're craving something salty, try snacking on a few olives, cut up veggies with some hummus, a Laughing Cow cheese wedge with a few crackers, or some edamame. If you're craving something sweet, try graham crackers, dried fruit with some dark chocolate chips, or a container of 2% fat Greek yogurt with 2 tsps honey.

Quit fighting with yourself over food. Healthy eating is not about strict nutrition philosophies, staying unrealistically thin, or depriving yourself of the foods you love. Rather, it's about feeling great, having more energy, and keeping yourself as healthy as possible – all which can be achieved by learning some nutrition basics and incorporating them in a way that works for you.